

NMFS Announces the Availability of Draft Amendment 5 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan for Management of Atlantic Sharks

November 15, 2012

Draft Amendment 5 to the Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) proposes a range of management measures to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished shark stocks. These measures are based on recent assessments that determined:

- Sandbar, dusky, Atlantic blacknose, and scalloped hammerhead sharks are overfished.
- Dusky, Atlantic blacknose, and scalloped hammerhead sharks are experiencing overfishing.
- The status of Gulf of Mexico blacknose sharks is unknown.
- Gulf of Mexico blacktip sharks are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Who is affected?

Draft Amendment 5 could affect:

- Any commercial fishermen using pelagic or bottom longline gear.
- Any recreational fishermen who catch sharks of any species.
- Any dealers who buy or sell sharks or shark products.

What will it do?

The full range of alternatives considered can be found in the draft environmental impact statement and/or proposed rule, which can be found at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/FMP/AM5.htm

The preferred alternatives, consistent with recent stock assessments, are summarized below and include:

- Total allowable catch limits and commercial quotas:
 - Creation of different species groupings such as hammerhead sharks and aggregated large coastal sharks.
 - Establishment of species-specific total allowable catches and commercial quotas for hammerhead, Atlantic blacknose, Gulf of Mexico blacknose, and Gulf of Mexico blacktip sharks.
 - Modifications and creation of regional quotas for all the species and species groups.

- Quota linkages between the following species and/or species groups:
 - o Gulf of Mexico blacktip, Gulf of Mexico hammerhead, and Gulf of Mexico aggregated large coastal sharks.
 - o Atlantic hammerhead and Atlantic aggregated large coastal sharks.
 - Gulf of Mexico blacknose and Gulf of Mexico non-blacknose small coastal sharks.
 - o Atlantic hammerhead and Atlantic aggregated large coastal sharks.
 - Atlantic blacknose and Atlantic non-blacknose small coastal sharks.
 - o Inseason and annual regional quota transfers for some species.

• Recreational measures:

- Minimum recreational size limit for all sharks would increase from 54 to 96 inches fork length (FL) (8 ft or 244 cm).
- o Establishment of non-tournament reporting for hammerhead sharks.
- o Improved outreach to anglers.
- Effort controls for bottom and pelagic longline fisheries:
 - Creation of hotspot time/area closures for pelagic longline vessels to reduce dusky shark interactions (see Figure 1).
 - o Modifications to the timing of the Mid-Atlantic shark closed area.
 - o Modifications to the Shark Research Fishery to reduce dusky shark interactions.

Submit Comments by February 12, 2013:

NMFS will hold numerous public hearings for this rulemaking along the Atlantic Coast, including the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico regions until the end of the comment period. During these hearings, NMFS will receive public feedback on the proposed management measures. Written comments, identified by "NOAA-NMFS-2012-0161", may be submitted electronically via the Federal eRulemaking Portal http://www.regulations.gov, or sent by fax or mail to the contact information included below. All comments received are a part of the public record and generally will be posted to http://www.regulations.gov without change. All Personal Identifying Information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter N/A in the required fields, if you wish to remain anonymous). You may submit attachments to electronic comments in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

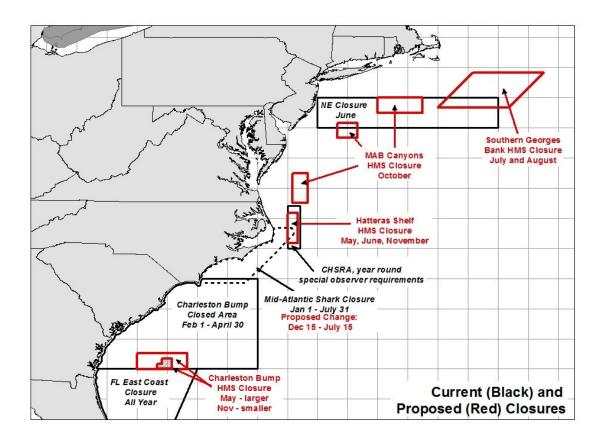


Figure 1: Map of proposed pelagic longline dusky shark hotspot closure areas

This notice is a courtesy to Atlantic HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of Federal Register. For further information on this proposed rule and draft environmental impact statement, contact Peter Cooper, Michael Clark, Guý DuBeck, or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at 301-427-8503. Copies of the proposed rule, draft environmental impact statement, and other supporting documents are available upon request from the Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone: 301-427-8503, fax: 301-713-1917). The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/.

Sign up for Atlantic HMS News

An electronic newsletter informing you of the latest HMS-related actions http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/newslist/